

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----014715 081559Z /40

P 081500Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8175

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6719

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: IS, RO, XF

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN: TRIP TO ROMANIA

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 6349, (B) BUCHAREST 6444

1. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN PROVIDED THE PROMISED DEBRIEFING
ON HIS ROMANIAN VISIT TO AMBASSADOR AND DCM DURING
COURSE OF A MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 7.

2. FOLLOWING ARE PRINCIPAL POINTS:

-- SOVIET-ISRAEL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. CEAUSESCU
SAID HE HAD RECENTLY RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH BREZHNEV WHO
HAD COMMENTED THAT THE POSSIBILITY SHOULD NOT BE EX-
CLUDED. THERE HAD BEEN SOME PROGRESS IN PAST MONTHS
TOWARD RENEWAL OF FORMAL TIES, BUT BREZHNEV COULD NOT
NOW COMMIT THE SOVIET UNION TO SUCH AN UNDERTAKING.
FOREIGN MINISTER MACOVESCU HAD ALSO DISCUSSED THE
MATTER WITH GROMYKO. LATTER THOUGHT THE MOMENT WAS NOT
RIGHT FOR RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS.

--EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI BILATERAL MEETING. CEAUSESCU
CLAIMED SADAT TOLD HIM EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT HE IS
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READY FOR A DIRECT MEETING BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF
EGYPT AND ISRAEL. BEGIN ASKED IF SADAT MEANT HE WAS
READY TO MEET WITH HIM (BEGIN). IF SO, BEGIN SAID HE
WAS PREPARED. CEAUSESCU THOUGHT A MEETING AT SUCH A
HIGH LEVEL WAS NOT YET IN THE CARDS, BUT THAT THE
INITIAL CONTACT WOULD HAVE TO BE BETWEEN "REPRESENTATIVES"
OF THE TWO COUNTRIES AT A LOWER, UNSPECIFIED

LEVEL. WHEN AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER BEGIN UNDERSTOOD THAT "BALL REMAINED IN THE ROMANIAN COURT" TO ARRANGE MEETING, RESPONSE WAS THAT IT REMAINED IN THE EGYPTIAN COURT.

--ARAFAT. CEAUSESCU BELIEVES HE IS A FINE MAN- THAT IS TO SAY, THERE ARE MANY WORSE THAN HE. SEVERAL HOURS OF THE EIGHT HOURS CEAUSESCU AND BEGIN SPENT TOGETHER WERE DEVOTED TO DISCUSSIONS OF ARAFAT AND THE PLO ISSUE. CEAUSESCU PERSISTED IN PRESSING BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PLO. WHEN BEGIN ASKED CEAUSESCU HOW HE WOULD HANDLE A SITUATION IN WHICH THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA DECLARED THE STATE TO BE NULL AND VOID AND ORGANIZED TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN, CEAUSESCU REFUSED TO REPLY SAVE TO SAY THAT THE COMPARISON WAS IRRELEVANT.

--LEGITIMACY OF 1967 BORDERS. BEGIN LECTURED CEAUSESCU ON THE LEGITIMACY OF CHANGES IN BORDERS FOLLOWING A CONFLICT BASED ON SELF-DEFENSE. WHEN CEAUSESCU DID NOT BUY THIS LINE OF REASONING BEGIN ASKED WHAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD DONE IN KONIGSBERG AFTER THE WAR. THE ROMANIANS LAUGHED. SUBSEQUENTLY BEGIN SAID THEY ADMITTED THAT HIS THESIS HIT VERY CLOSE TO HOME BECAUSE OF THE BESSARABIAN PROBLEM.

--SOVIET-ROMANIAN RELATIONS AND ISRAEL. ACCORDING TO CEAUSESCU KOSYGIN HAD INSISTED THAT ROMANIA SEVER RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL AFTER THE YOM KIPPUR WAR.
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CEAUSESCU HAD REFUSED. THE SOVIETS HAD ALSO DEMANDED PERMISSION FOR OVERFLIGHTS OF ROMANIA DURING THE 1973 AERIAL RE-SUPPLY OPERATION OF EGYPT AND SYRIAN FORCES. CEAUSESCU SAID HE HAD MADE THE SOVIETS FURIOUS BY REFUSING THIS REQUEST.

--ROMANIAN EMIGRATION TO ISRAEL. IN HIS TALKS WITH PRIME MINISTER MANESCU, BEGIN HIT A STONE WASS ON THIS SUBJECT. MANESCU CLAIMED THERE WERE ONLY 25,000 JEWS REMAINING IN THE COUNTRY. THE STATE HAD A LARGE EDUCATIONAL

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UREHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1653

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6719

EXDIS

INVESTMENT IN THEM AND COULD NOT SANCTION THEIR EMIGRATION. THEY WERE NEEDED TO BUILD THE NEW ROMANIA. INITIALLY CEAUSESCU TOOK THE SAME LINE. EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, HE AGREED THAT ANY APPLICATIONS FOR REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES WOULD RECEIVE "A POSITIVE REACTION." MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL EVRON DISCUSSED DETAILS OF THIS AGREEMENT WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PACOSTE (FYI WE WILL ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM EVRON). BEGIN ASKED THAT 5,000 JEWS PER ANNUM BE PERMITTED TO EMIGRATE. SUBSEQUENTLY IT WAS AGREED THAT NO NUMBERS WOULD BE MENTIONED. BEGIN INSTRUCTED THE ISRAELI EMBASSY TO COORDINATE THE REGISTRATION OF ALL THOSE FAMILIES DESIRING TO APPLY FOR REUNIFICATION ("EVERYBODY IN ROMANIA IS RELATED TO SOMEBODY IN ISRAEL"). HE SPECIFICALLY ORDERED THAT ALL THOSE WHO HAD BEEN DENIED PERMISSION TO EMIGRATE BE APPRISED OF THE NEW AGREEMENT BY THE ISRAELI EMBASSY IN BUCHAREST. BEGIN SAID HE INTENDS TO WATCH THE OCTOBER-NOVEMBER APPROVAL AND DEPARTURE FIGURES VERY CLOSELY. HE PROMISED TO INFORM US OF ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON THIS ISSUE. INCIDENTALLY, HE ACCEPTS THE FIGURE OF 45-50,000 JEWS REMAINING IN ROMANIA TO BE THE MOST CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCURATE ESTIMATE.

-- ECONOMIC RELATIONS. BOTH SIDES AGREED TO ATTEMPT TO BALANCE THEIR TWO-WAY TRADE THIS YEAR. THE ISRAELI MINISTER OF INDUSTRIES WILL FOLLOW-UP WITH SPECIFIC PROPOSALS DURING HIS VISIT TO ROMANIA IN NOVEMBER. THE ROMANIANS PUSHED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOME MIXED VENTURES AND THE ISRAELIS ASKED CEAUSESCU TO RE-CONSIDER USING THE ASHKELON PIPE LINE FOR THE TRANSHIPMENT OF ROMANIAN-PURCHASED IRANIAN CRUDE FROM THE RED SEA TO THE MEDITERRANEAN. BEGIN WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT EVENTUAL ROMANIAN RESPONSE.

3. COMMENT: BEGIN APPRAISED CEAUSESCU AS A VERY SHREWD AND INTELLIGENT POLITICAL LEADER. HE CHARACTERIZED HIM AS A MAN OF STRONG MORAL AUTHORITY. HE WAS APPALLED THAT NO ONE IN CEAUSESCU'S ENTOURAGE EVER SAID A WORD IN HIS PRESENCE, CONTRASTING THIS WITH HIS OWN ADVISER'S PROPENSITY FOR INTERRUPTING AND CORRECTING HIM. HE SAID CEAUSESCU HAD GIVEN HIM A TERRIBLE INFERIORITY COMPLEX BY HIS MASTERY OF TRIVIAL STATISTICS. HE CITED AN ANECDOTE IN WHICH CEAUSESCU EXPOUNDED ON THE NUMBER OF PAIRS OF SHOES THAT EXISTED IN ROMANIA BEFORE THE WAR (4,500,000). NOW THERE ARE 70 MILLION PAIRS OF SHOES AVAILABLE FOR 21.5 MILLION PAIRS OF FEET. BEGIN LAMENTED HE COULD BE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE AND STILL NEVER KNOW THE SHOE POPULATION OF ISRAEL.

4. BEGIN SEES THE VISIT AS A NET SUCCESS EVEN THOUGH THERE PROVED TO BE (NOT UNEXPECTEDLY) GREATER AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT THAN AGREEMENT. HE IS CONVINCED HE HAS FORGED A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH CEAUSESCU AND HE IS ESPECIALLY OPTIMISTIC THAT HE MAY HAVE ACHIEVED A BREAK

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THROUGH ON THE THORNY ISSUE OF EMIGRATION. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS EFFUSIVE IN HIS APPRECIATION FOR DCM VIETS' THOROUGH AND ACCURATE BRIEFING BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE. HE ALSO COMMENTED WITH SPECIAL GRATITUDE ON THE CONTRIBUTION AMBASSADOR BARNES HAS MADE IN FACILITATING JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA.

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